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ABSTRACT

Student transfers from school to school at the elementary and secondary levels have been increasing for many decades. A proposed typology of major school transfer flows distinguishes between "systemic" transfers, caused by changes in school structures, and "individualistic" transfers, caused by family or individual changes. Within this typology, transfers can be further analyzed by their origins, timing in the school year, severity of student or community responses, and the nature of school programs for new students. Current theories on transfers, drawn from the fields of social organization and social and individual psychology, fail to address the full array of conditions affecting school transfers. Similarly, a review of research literature on student responses to transfers, and on the effects of transfers on students of different ages, reveals an absolute lack of research as well as design deficiencies and inconsistent results in the existing research. Moreover, little information has been gathered on school practices for handling school transfers. Based on the typology and on these criticisms of current knowledge, a research model is proposed that combines individual and background factors, transfer characteristics, school and community characteristics, school programs for transfer students, and student adjustment responses. (Author/RW)

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A School Transfer Typology: Implications For New Theory, Revised Research Design, and Refocused School Policy and Practice*

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Abstract

School transfer is a pervasive experience for American elementary and secondary students. This paper explicates the principal transfer flows and offers a typology including the associated features of these flows. Limitations of existing theory, research, and knowledge of school practices are described. A heuristic research model, incorporating the typology and designed to address prior methodological and conceptual limitations, is presented.

A School Transfer Typology: Implications for New Theory, Revised Research Design, and Refocused School Policy and Practice

A half century ago, the average school-age child experienced perhaps one change in school environment over the course of his or her educational career. Today the average child may expect to attend school in five or more different locations during the course of the first twelve years of education. Moreover, unlike their predecessors, today's school children are more likely to experience significant discontinuities in their other environmental settings at the same time as they shift school settings. Changes in the peer group, neighborhood and community environment, and even in the child's family composition, are more likely than formerly to accompany a change in the child's school setting.

In this paper, we review some of the major reasons for these substantial changes in the school transfer experiences of American children and we propose a preliminary typology of between-school transfers. This typology is then extended with general propositions on the relative severity and consequences of major types of transitions and on related school policies and practices addressing the transfer student. Selected research literature is reviewed on students' responses and adaptation to school transfer. Some inconsistencies in findings are noted. Gaps in theory and in research focus are explicated, utilizing the proposed typology as a means to highlight general methodological, research design, and conceptualization issues. Finally, the implications for future research and for policy are

explored, with particular reference to the policy and practice of school systems.

Reasons for Growth in School Transfer Experiences: A Typology

One obvious reason why today's youth are more subject to transferring among schools is simply that they are "at-risk"--resident in the school system--for a longer period of time than formerly. In the 1920's, only about 30 percent of young people graduated from high school; today, three-quarters do so (Grant and Lind, 1979:15).

A countervailing factor is the gradual consolidation of public schools and the closing of most single-teacher schools. The number of elementary and secondary schools in the United States declined from 275,000 in 1929 to 106,000 in 1977 (Grant and Lind, 1979:53). Hence, there are fewer schools in the nation among which children might transfer. Nevertheless, there are a number of key reasons why the rate of school transfer is growing. Some of these are systemic, the consequence of changes in the American education model, and some are individualistic, resulting from changes among individuals and families in the United States.

Systemic Change. A principal set of reasons for the growth in school transfer experiences of American children are systemic ones. First, system structure itself has changed. A half century ago, the modal system was a four-year high school preceded by unreorganized eight-year elementary schools. Three-quarters of the school systems were of this traditional 8-4 type. Today, only one-fourth of the schools operate under this traditional

model; 6-3-3, 6-2-4 and 5-3-4 patterns prevail (Figure 1). Consequently, the average young person who reaches high school--and far greater numbers and proportions do so today--will have made one more change in schools during his or her educational career simply because of the change in dividing up the prevailing K-12 school model over the last half century.

The second principal historical systemic change affecting the rate of change in the child's experiences of shifts in school environments is due to rezoning for racial desegregation. Traced to the historic 1954 Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, and to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, large numbers of children have been mandated to change schools or have changed schools under voluntary programs to balance the racial and ethnic composition of the schools. Moreover, apart from racial composition concerns, an additional substantial number of children are annually reassigned to another school to accommodate school closings, to balance system enrollment and to accommodate shifts in "enrollment demand" across neighborhood schools within a school district.

The result of the foregoing rezoning and reassignment of students for these various reasons has been to increase the average travel distance to school, and hence increase the reliance on busing, as well as to increase the experience of school transfer by children. In 1930, less than one in ten children was transported to school at public expense; in the early 1950's it was three in ten; by 1978 it was more than four in ten children being bused to school daily (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1979).

Individualistic Factors. Another series of reasons why children move from school-to-school entail individual and family decisions. These may involve academic or other considerations regarding the child, family tradition or

belief systems, changes in family circumstances or residence, or response to dissatisfaction with systemic changes. In any case, unlike transfers for systemic reasons which generally involve the relocation of entire cohorts of children, these generally involve relocation of the individual child from one school to another.

One significant individualistic school transfer flow is between the public and the private school sectors. While the number of public schools, particularly one-teacher elementary schools, has been declining precipitously over the past half century, the number of nonpublic schools has been growing, with their numbers peaking in the mid-1960's. Currently, 12 percent of elementary and secondary school children are enrolled in nonpublic schools (Grant and Lind, 1979). The student flows between these sectors--in both directions, from public-to-private and from private-to-public--are relatively volatile. That is, large streams of students annually transfer between these sectors for a variety of reasons: academic, financial, social, personal or religious. Only a minority of students with some private or parochial education during grades 1 through 12 has had all 12 years of their schooling in the nonpublic sector.

Another individualistic reason why students may be transferred between schools is for academic or behavioral remediation. A portion of this type of transfer is reflected in the public-to-private school transfer phenomenon, but an additional number of students are individually transferred between public schools to address special academic or behavioral problems of the child. Recent legislation to encourage "mainstreaming" of students formerly in special education programs has likewise temporarily increased individualistic school transfer flows.

Another set of individualistic reasons why children transfer between schools is because of family residential change. Today's America is a country of modern nomads. In any given year, more than one in every six Americans changes residence (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1977). Moreover, families with school-age children are especially likely to undertake residential moves (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980). Today's average American can expect to move 13 times over one's lifespan (Long, 1973; Lyons, Nam and Ockay, 1980; Wilber, 1963), more than three of which will take place during the school-age years (Long and Boertlein, 1976).

A majority of moves by members of the population are relatively short-distance residential ones. Nevertheless, many would still entail a change of school for the child involved in the move. Indeed, some residential moves may be "white flight" attempts to alter the student composition of a child's school (Coleman, Kelly and Moore, 1975; Farley, Richards and Wurdock, 1980), or are precipitated by other decisions to alter the local school environment of the child. Moreover, as shown in Table 1, a substantial proportion (two-fifths) of the children who move are relatively long-distance movers (outside of the county of previous residence). Hence, substantial numbers of families and their uprooted children must deal with a change in schools resulting from geographic relocation. Indeed, for some segments of the school-age population, regular relocation of residence is routine and hence regular new school experiences are expected of the children. Military families are classic examples, as are the children of some corporate executives, some clergy, and those of migrant argicultural workers.

A Theory Dearth

Despite the pervasiveness of school transfer, neither educators nor behavioral scientists have developed any systematic theory of school transfer and its sequelae. There is no integrative theory on school transfer addressing the dynamics related to the full array of conditions outlined above which engender school change. Nor is there adequate theory which focuses on any of the separate transfer streams. Indeed, Metz (1971) and Long (1975) suggest that there is no existent theory.

However, there has been some rudimentary "theory," but it has tended to obfuscate the study of the transfer process. Social organization theory, for example, tends to view the transfer process as monolithic. Wheeler's (1966) conceptualization is illustrative: he suggests that unlike other "socialization organizations," the timing of entrance and exit to a particular educational setting is more "routinized" (p. 66) and the transition sequences are "built into the educational system" (p. 97). In essence, the resulting theory ignores the large, frequently occurring, individualistic streams of transfer students described above.

A second theoretical perspective which likewise appears to misfocus attention on school transfer is derived from psychiatric literature. This perspective typically addresses selected cases of individualistic transfer, generally resulting from geographic and social mobility. In his influential theory, for example, Harry Stack Sullivan (1953) asserts that it is "...quite disastrous...[to move]...the juvenile from one school to another ...[and]...is apt to leave a very considerable handicap in...subsequent development" (pp. 241-242). Erikson (1950) has likewise stressed the

importance of environmental continuity to the child's ego-identity and ego-development. Based on only the severe instances of child maladjustment to family moves and school transfers, which result in professional treatment, psychiatric case study literature has "documented" the adverse effect of school transfer (e.g., Stubblefield, 1955; Tooley, 1970). Moreover, a preponderance of ecological studies on mobility and emotional disturbance, reviewed by Kantor (1965), likewise contributed substantiation to this perspective. However, large scale studies of mobility and of school transfer do not consistently substantiate perverse general effects on children.

A third perspective draws from social psychological theories of socialization. The early work of Mead (1934), for example, implies the need for maintenance of a stable social context in the development of the "self." Nevertheless, the perspective has not been directly applied to the school transfer phenomenon, although Thornton (1972) has demonstrated how socialization theory and concepts might be usefully employed in understanding the adjustment process to new school situations.

Despite the absence of robust "theory," or consistent empirical research conclusions (see below), Long (1975:378) suggests that families "act as if" school transfer has deleterious effects. Based on the analysis of residential mobility decisions, he concludes that parents perceive that mobility creates difficulties for children. Conventional wisdom on the perceived effects of moving is likewise reflected in timing of moves: more families move during the period immediately preceding the beginning of the school year than at any other time of the year. There is also often strong community resistance to systemic changes which require transfer of children between schools. On the other hand, however, some types of school transfer would appear to be prompted by presumptions of improvement for the child;

e.g., residential changes from urban to suburban communities for schooling reasons, or the public to private school transfer of some students.

School Transfer as an Integrative Focus

Despite the lack of comprehensive theory, the key trends and factors reviewed above which have given rise to the growing rate of school transfers can provide a preliminary integrative focus to future inquiry. This typology and its associated features is summarized in Figure 2. It is proposed as an initial guide for future research which will provide adequate tests of "conventional wisdom" in the case of school transfer for individualistic reasons as well as tests of the rationales for restructuring schools in cases which would result in systemic transfer of students.

For the child, the school is second only to the family as the most significant social setting. In general, the adaptations which the child undertakes in coping with a changed school environment (and the competence with which the school facilitates the integration of the new child) is the most salient, immediate challenge for the child, regardless of the reason for school transfer. Nevertheless, the rudiments of a typology of school transfer provided above might also suggest that the process and the conditions under which the child is integrated into a new environment, and both the social and academic adaptation of the child, are in fact dependent upon the etiology of the school transfer experience and its sequelae. These hypothetical relationships, summarized in Figure 2, are outlined below.

Type of Transfer and Response Severity. Systemic changes in schools which result in the transfer of children can provide a major source of community debate and dissension. This is particularly the case when the transfer of students is prompted by pressures for racial desegregation of school systems. However, the American myth of "neighborhood schools" is likely to engender community resistance to student transfer for other systemic reasons as well. School authorities and community leaders often face the consolidated inertia of parents whether the issue be the location of a projected new school, the closing of an existing school, reassignment or rezoning of students to balance enrollments and to optimize the utility of existing physical plants, or when adopting new system models establishing separate middle schools or junior high schools.

In sum, systemic changes which result in the school transfer of children in the community often generate severe societal response. However, these types of changes likely generate less severe transitional adjustment difficulties for the children involved than do school transfers for non-systemic reasons. That is, the transition is not generally accompanied by the same degree of other massive significant changes in the social experience of the child as is the case with individualistic reasons for school transfer. In the case of systemic transfers, the peer group would generally be accompanying the child to the new school, friendship networks are maintained, and family, neighborhood, and community activities generally remain stable.

In contrast, school transfers prompted by individual factors generally provide less "anchoring" continuity in the child's life experiences. Such moves may require simultaneous adjustment to not only the new school setting but also to the entire social and physical environment of the child

outside of the nuclear family. The critical orientation function of the neighborhood is disrupted, and the child who moves must undertake the important task of re-establishing his sense of "neighborhood" (Newman and Newman, 1978) and "place identity" (Proshansky and Kaminoff, 1980). Residential moves are also more likely accompanied by changes in the family milieu as well, with a move representing a familial change in social mobility, or a change in the marital relationship of the parents, including separation or divorce (Lacey and Blane, 1979).

Transfer and School Response. In addition to the community, and the child and his or her family, the third principal response system to school transfer is the school organization itself. Specifically, we focus on the degree to which the school equips itself for processing school transfers.

Schools can be viewed as transition organizations. Schools are dynamic institutions adapting to ever changing clientele from year-to-year (the input-output model of education). However, the principal new input to the system generally occurs at the beginning of the school year. Hence, all schools are generally prepared to handle the influx of a new cohort of first-time entrants to the facility at the beginning of the year--"articulation" procedures are established, the school staff is equipped and prepared to "process" the new students, and the students together experience a common adjustment.

With rare exception, all transfers resulting from systemic factors occur at the beginning of the school year. In contrast, school transfer as the result of individualistic factors are more likely to be scattered throughout the school year. In secondary schools, an average of one in 20 students enter after the initial fall enrollment period; in elementary

schools, one in ten enrolled students enter after the beginning of the school year (Metz, 1971). In these cases of mid-year transfer, it is hypothesized that the intake process is more individualistic based upon ad hoc procedure, disruptive of school routine, and less routinized.

Moreover, individualistic mid-year transfer may provide the new student with the psycho-social experience of "stranger." The environment within the school may be somewhat more hostile to individualistic transfers than to systemic ones. There is some suggestive evidence that both teachers (Harms, 1976) and students (Schaller, 1973) approach newcomers with negative perceptions.

In sum, it is postulated that schools may be most poorly equipped to facilitate the child's adjustment to a new school environment under those conditions in which the degree of severity of the experience for the child is greatest. This proposition is coincidentally consistent with conventional wisdom. Families are more likely to move just prior to the beginning of the school year than at any other time of the year, although there is some evidence to suggest that a springtime moves makes school change easier for children (Barrett and Noble, 1973). Some van lines support the argument of not changing schools during the term (Child Study Association of America and Allied Van Lines, 1960), while others now suggest that a move during the school year may be especially facilitative to a child entering a new school environment (American Movers Conference, n.d.). In any event, there is a dearth of research results which test the proposition and conventional wisdom, and the latter recommendation to parents is based on little empirical verification and perhaps more on the moving industry's interest to more evenly spread the demand for its services over the calendar year.

The Current State of Research

Despite psychiatric case studies documenting dramatic maladaptations of young persons coincident with school transfer, the general theme of many essays and analyses has been to characterize the remarkable resilience and adaptability of young persons to their new school environments. However, despite the abundant research on the academic and social adjustment of school children, no studies have addressed the relative differential impacts of the various types of transfer experiences. Moreover, relatively little large-scale sociological, demographic, and educational research bears directly on the question of school transfer. There are some studies on student adjustment to new school environments, occasional recommendations as to the process by which schools might facilitate the integration of students into their new schools, and only a few controlled studies on the relationship between school intake process and subsequent student adjustment.

Design Deficiencies in Student Adjustment Studies. The research literature abounds with studies on the academic and social adjustment of school children. Yet there is relatively little which addresses adjustment as a function of the school transfer experience. The strongest research tradition relating school adjustment and school transfer is in studies of school desegregation and racial integration, extending back to Coleman's landmark Equality of Educational Opportunity (EEO) work (Coleman et al., 1966). Nevertheless, even in that impressive two-volume work, the extent of school changes which individual children had experienced, while compiled

in the data collection phase, was largely unanalyzed in its relationship to key criterion variables of student outcomes.

Moreover, when school transfer experience is the focus of research, the independent variable is most commonly operationalized as the number of different schools the student has attended. While such a measure is easily obtained from school records or student questionnaires, its conceptual utility is extremely limited. As reflected in the foregoing typology, the number of schools which a student has attended over his or her educational career simply aggregates all of the conditions and reasons for school transfer. The results of such studies--which generally report no relationship between the number of schools attended and measures of either cognitive or noncognitive adjustment--provide little context for determining the impact of school change on students under varying conditions.

More macro-level, or ecological, studies likewise may confound the potentially diverse effects of various school transfer streams. Measures of "school turnover," such as those employed in the EEO study (Coleman et al., 1966) or more recently by Auer et al., (1978) are illustrative of over-aggregation. Two main independent components of turnover, for example, are residential change (intra-district or intra-county moves) and geographic mobility (inter-district, inter-county or interstate moves). Yet the antecedents of these two types of change are substantially different, with the net potential effect being to diminish or cancel out observable differences in criterion measures. This model is diagrammed in Figure 3.

Studies of school transfer also often reflect other basic methodological difficulties. One such limitation is the analytical method employed to assess the measure(s) of adjustment. Generally only an average (mean)

score on criterion variables is assessed in relationship to various categories of frequency of school changes. Examination of the range and variances of the adjustment measures are required. For some types of school transfer decisions, changes are made because it is assumed that they will provide beneficial effects. For others, school change is necessitated by systemic or individualistic reasons largely unrelated to consideration of the impact on the adjustment or on school progress of the child. Hence, school transfer may improve the adjustment of some and impair the adjustment of others, thereby increasing the variance which is not reflected in any assessment of overall average effects.

Another methodological limitation of many studies is the lack of control for other relevant variables, either concomitant changes in the family, school or community conditions, or the related circumstances of the child himself. Excepting for studies focused on military families and Kantor's (1965) analysis of the joint effects of both residential and social mobility, there are few studies which relate familial circumstances as concomitants of school change. An extensive literature search revealed no studies, for example, which assessed the interaction effect of changes in family composition (e.g., birth of a sibling, change in marital status of the parents) and school transfer on student adjustment.

Nor is there extensive study of the effects of the degree of similarity in the organization and structure of the sending and receiving schools on student adjustment. The extent that pedagogical practice, classroom organization, curricula sequencing, and student body composition varies between these two settings might be assumed to correlate with the length and severity of the adjustment process of the child. Other ecological factors such as school size (Morgan and Alwin, 1980) and class size (Glass

and Smith, 1979; Smith and Glass, 1980) have been shown to impact on student development, and it is probable that the differences in these attributes between the sending and the receiving school will likewise impact on the transfer student.

Additionally, there are no studies of neighborhood or community conditions external to the school system which may nevertheless impact on the overall adjustment of the child under conditions of transfer. In the case of a child who moves, for example, the degree of community stability or turnover and growth might significantly impact on how the child is received by peers and by school personnel. The impact of changing from a rural to urban, or urban to suburban, community might likewise indicate an interaction effect between changed community characteristics and a changed school on student adjustment.

Assessment of individual characteristics as they might interact with adjustment to school change likewise requires greater research attention. There is growing evidence that disadvantaged children respond differently than "average" or "advantaged" children. While relatively few studies do so, it appears critical to take at least aptitude (IQ) level and socio-economic (SES) level into account in the study of the impact of school transfer. Studies on school change resulting from desegregation, reviewed by Anderson et al. (1976), and research on school transfer due to geographic relocation, reviewed by Schaller (1974) and by Whalen and Fried (1973), generally demonstrate differential impacts for different levels of SES and IQ when these intervening variables are taken into account in the research design. Another example of these differential effects is shown in Figure 3, presented earlier, where the relationship of SES and IQ to two types of intervening residence change circumstances is shown to have

differing indirect effects on the ecological construct of "school turnover" as it subsequently impacts on student outcome measures.

A final methodological shortcoming in studies of school transfer effects is the general absence of longitudinal designs. While some notable before-after assessments have been undertaken (Anderson et al., 1976; Kantor, 1965; Lacey and Blane, 1979), most studies are cross-sectional. However, school transfers--particularly those resulting from individualistic processes--are not drawn from a random cross-section of students. There is a substantial amount of self-selection, and hence differential background correlates, of electing to transfer between public and private or parochial schools, of exercising transfer under freedom of choice plans for school desegregation, or being geographically mobile rather than remaining in a single community over time.

A heuristic research model, designed to address these foregoing methodological and conceptual difficulties, is presented in Figure 4. A principal feature of this model is the integration of the transfer typology. It also specifies the key domains of variables for inquiry, it stresses possible interaction effects, and it is predicated on a longitudinal design.

Inconsistencies in Results: The Case of Transfer Timing. In addition to questions of the impact of school transfer on a student's cognitive and noncognitive adjustment, an allied concern is the influence of timing on adjustment. Whether the transfer is due to systemic policies or engendered by individualistic factors, one concern is whether a transition to a new school is less disruptive at certain ages or grade levels than at others.

Some of the strongest research evidence on this question addresses the

alternate structures which a community may adopt to divide up its K-12 school system. Most notable is the recent work by Blyth, Simmons, and associates which focuses on the establishment of "middle schools" (Blyth et al., 1978; Simmons, Blyth, et al., 1979; Simmons, Bulcroft, et al., 1979). Analysis is focused on the adjustment of grade school students who experience systemic transfer out of the K-6 schools to their counterparts who remain in a K-8 "traditional" system. They find that systemic transfer at grade 7 to a junior high school is deleterious, particularly as regards girls' self-concept. They conclude that there is a "special vulnerability" of adolescent girls who are enrolled in systems which require that they transfer to junior high schools. However, recent analysis of individualistic instances of transfer, resulting from residential change, has failed to show any significant effect of school change on self-concept for any school-age group (Kroger, 1980).

Another thrust of research has focused on adjustment as a function of the timing of geographic mobility. Like Blyth, Simmons, and associates, Inbar (1976; Inbar and Adler, 1976) also writes of "the vulnerable age," but sets this vulnerability at a different developmental point. Based on several U.S. samples as well as cross-cultural data, Inbar concludes that deleterious effects of residential change are most pronounced for elementary school age children, particularly boys.

A third line of argument is that school transfer, at least of the individualistic type, becomes linearly more difficult with age, from early childhood through adolescence. This is based on the assumption that the peer group is of growing importance to the child through this entire period, and hence "uprooting" of the child from his or her peers will

generate greater difficulty of adjustment to new school environments as the child matures through the teen years (Smith and Christopherson, 1966).

The foregoing truncated review of the timing of school transfer and consequent student adjustment demonstrates the need for further analysis of this relationship. There is no cumulative research base to ascertain when a school transfer is best encountered, or whether adjustment difficulties by age/grade level varies as a function of the type of school transfer which is encountered. Indeed, there is no consensus as to whether or not transfer between schools is deleterious (cf. Swanson, 1969; Landis and Stoetzer, 1966; Barrett and Noble, 1973).

School Process. Regardless of whether or not the school transfer experience has anything but short-term implications for the individual, it is necessary for the school to develop some materials and procedures to deal with incoming students. The resources may be viewed simply as necessary for "orientation," or they may be considered as facilitative mechanisms to diminish "transfer shock" as well. In his monograph on school transfer, written more than a quarter century ago, Kopp (1953) catalogs "orientation techniques" for new students. These include a conference with a guidance counselor, a peer "buddy" system for newcomers, a school tour, and provision of building floor plans to the student. These practices perhaps still represent the more prevalent ones employed by schools today, along with providing a student handbook on school policy, procedure and regulations.

Relatively little published literature reports policies of schools or the activities of school personnel as regards the intake of new transfer students. If many schools have developed new innovative programs and efforts designed for various types of transfer students, they have not yet

been widely reported in the archival literature. Only a few anecdotal descriptive accounts of special programming for transfers are reported, and generally only impressionistic assessments are offered. Only two recent studies have been identified which incorporate an experimental design, with control groups and before- and after-assessment. Both assess the impact of weekly structured group counseling programs for new transfer students. The first, by Plon (1973), assesses the effects of 14 weekly group counseling sessions for parochial-to-public school transfers in grades 9 and 10. The other, by Flanagan (1977), employed six weekly group counseling sessions for new community residents in grades 7 and 8. In both cases, the transfers in the experimental groups were shown to have adapted more effectively to their new school environments than had their counterparts in the control groups.

On balance, there would appear to be few long-term efforts by school systems to integrate their new transfer students, and fewer assessments of the utility of these efforts when they do exist. Moreover, there is little evidence of the sufficiency or effectiveness of the more common short-term "orientation" tools for the longer-term adjustment needs of school transfer students. Indeed, it may still be appropriate to conclude, as did Levine (1966), that "schools do not offer special help to mobile children" (p. 61) and they generally have "...no systematic program for orienting new students" (p. 66).

Conclusion

In the introduction to his best-seller, Alvin Toffler (1970) characterizes present American society as "...a roaring current of change, a current

so powerful today that it overturns institutions, shifts our values and shrivels our roots" (p. 1). He continues by assessing the American educational system as unequipped to deal with this change, as "anti-adaptive" (p. 409).

In this paper, we provide a typology of school transfer and document how prevalent the experience of school change is today. For both systemic and individualistic reasons, the average child can now expect to encounter numerous new school environmental settings over his or her educational career. These experiences may in themselves better prepare the next generations for a society under constant change, but it may still be the case that the schools are "anti-adaptive," doing little to equip the child for change or to facilitate the child's adjustment to a new environment.

There are few empirical bases on which to assess the degree to which schools respond programmatically to turnover in their student bodies. There is less knowledge as to the effectiveness of such programs. To the present, research on the adjustment of children to a change of schools has generally been flawed by several conceptual and methodological problems. Research has not focused on the full array of conditions and contexts explicited in the transfer typology presented above. Utilization of this typology may provide greater insight into the circumstances under which the community and the individual student may experience resistance to school change or difficulty in adjustment to the change.

For some children, it is widely believed that a school change may be advantageous, providing a chance for "new beginnings" and improvement of interpersonal relationships, achievements, and behavior. However, research assessments predicated on negative psychiatric premises, or employing methods which ignore variances in response to school transfer, have simply

not addressed hypothesized positive benfits. Moreover, disconnected research results demonstrate that a move to a new school is not without some negative consequence for many children.

There is also little evidence that schools have responded to either the conventional wisdom or the research, despite massive growth in the incidence of school transfer over recent years. To the extent that school systems might be structured to adapt their undifferentiated intake policies to respond to different needs of children under differing transfer circumstances, they may become less "anti-adaptive" for future generations of school children.

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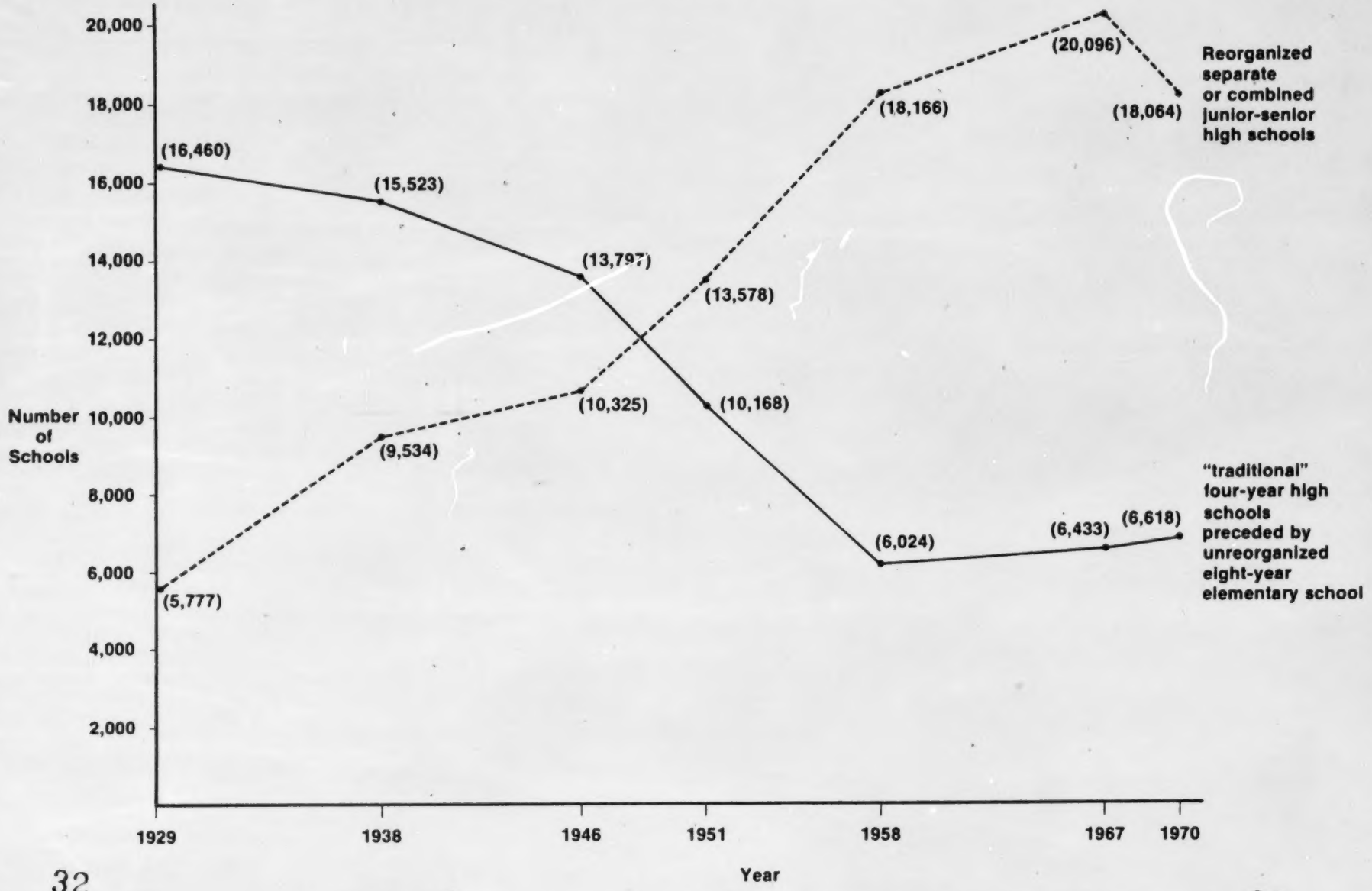
Table 1. Geographic Mobility of School-Age Children: March 1975 to March 1979 (in percentages)

Age Group	Total	Same House (non-movers)	Same County	Same State, Different County	Different State	From Abroad
5 to 9 years	100.0	47.2	30.2	10.8	9.9	1.9
10 to 14 years	100.0	61.2	22.5	7.6	7.4	1.3
15 to 19 years	100.0	66.1	19.7	6.4	6.2	1.5
Total	100.0	58.8	23.8	8.1	7.7	1.5

Source: U. S. Bureau of The Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 353, "Geographic Mobility: March 1975 to March 1979," Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980, Table 6.

Figure 1. Number of U.S. Public Secondary Schools, by Type: Selected Years 1929-1970

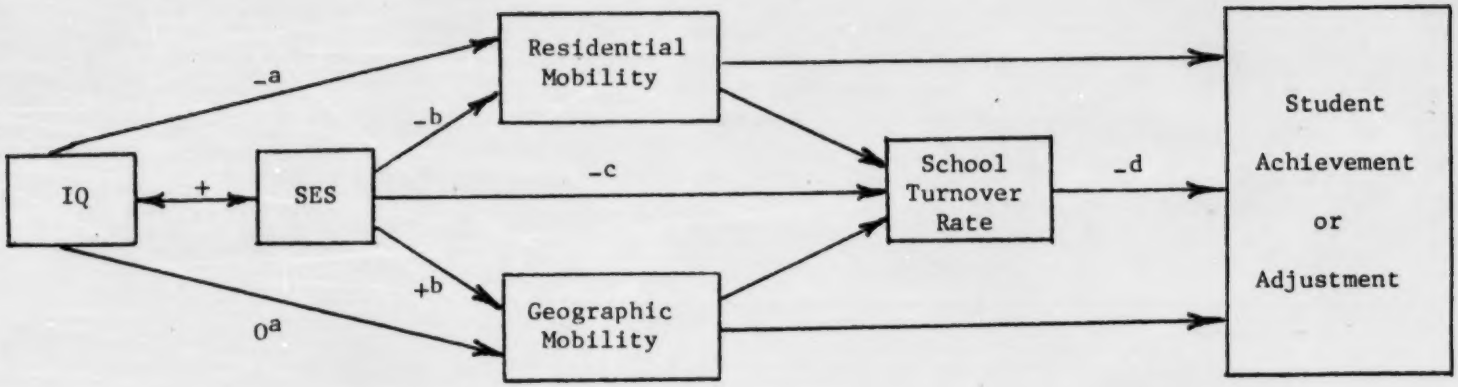


Source: W. Vance Grant and C. George Lind, **Digest of Education Statistics 1979** (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), Table 59.

Figure 2. A School Transfer Typology, with Associated Features

	Generic Type of Transfer	
	SYSTEMIC	INDIVIDUALISTIC
Principal Distinguishing Feature:	School change of entire grade cohort, or a major segment of the peer group	Transfer primarily involving individual relocation decisions
Origins of Major Flows:	Structural organization of school system Rezoning: Desegregation Rezoning: Enrollment distribution	Family residential change Public-parochial-private interchanges
Other Transfer Flows:	Closing/consolidation of schools Catastrophic damage to school building (e.g., fire)	Academic or behavioral remediation Mainstreaming handicapped
Community Response to Change:	Ranges from none to severe	No response--generally unrecognized by community (but high turnover rates may create major instructional problems for affected schools)
School-year Timing of Transfer:	Concentrated primarily at beginning of year	Scattered over year, but peak in fall
Structured School Program for New Student:	Formalized "articulation" program; organized orientation with broad school personnel involvement	If entry at beginning of school year, principally same orientation as systemic transfers; otherwise, largely ad hoc routine delegated to school counselor and individual classroom teachers
Hypothesized Level of Student Adjustment Problems:	Generally negligible to mild	Generally short-term moderate problem level, but ranges from enhanced school adjustment for some to isolated cases of extreme difficulty

Figure 3. Differential Antecedent Effects on Migration Components in Ecological Studies of School Enrollment Turnover



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[b]U. S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 353, "Geographic Mobility: March 1975 to March 1979," Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1980. Tables 22, 24, 28.

[c]Guthrie, James W., Kleindorfer, George B., Levine, Henry M., and Stout, Robert T., Schools and Inequality (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971).

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Figure 4. A Heuristic Longitudinal and Interactional Model for Research on School Transfer